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ABSTRACT

A catalytic leader brings together diverse individuals from multiple agencies to address intractable public problems. Strategies for promoting catalytic leadership are explored. The book opens with a review of the problems facing public leaders, emphasizing the complexity and interconnectedness of problems in the public sphere. The book highlights the differences among contemporary forms of corporate leadership, showing how public leadership is different from traditional organizational leadership. It then introduces four catalytic tasks, arguing that together the four tasks can amplify their catalytic impact when addressing public problems. A chapter is devoted to each task: (1) focus attention by elevating the issue to the public and policy agendas; (2) engage people in the effort by convening the diverse set of people, agencies, and interests needed to address the issue; (3) stimulate multiple strategies and options for action; and (4) sustain action and maintain momentum by managing the interconnections through appropriate institutionalization and rapid information sharing and feedback. The last section of the volume turns to the foundational skills for catalytic leaders, outlining tips for thinking and acting strategically, for facilitating productive working groups, and for tapping into personal passion and strength of character. An appendix describes how to establish criteria based on desired outcomes. (Contains an index and approximately 315 references.) (RJM)

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